

VZCZCXRO1924
PP RUEHROV
DE RUEHJM #0793/01 1331404
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 121404Z MAY 08
FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1472
INFO RUEHKK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 000793

SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE. NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/PASCUAL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/12/2018
TAGS: [KWBG](#) [PBTS](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: SETTLERS CELEBRATE ISRAEL'S - AND THEIR OWN -
INDEPENDENCE

REF: JERUSALEM 546

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Settlers demonstrated at three West Bank locations - Homesh and Sanur, both evacuated in 2005 and Migron outpost - on May 8, the 60th anniversary of Israeli independence. Press reported 10,000 demonstrators at Homesh, 150 at Sanur, and 2,000 at Migron. Settlers now maintain a 24 hour presence (without the IDF) at Homesh, to which they have repeatedly marched over the last year. Their arrival at Sanur was the first since 2005. At Migron, which the GOI recognizes as illegal and has pledged to dismantle by August 2008, settlers heckled Yesha Council leaders for negotiating with the GOI over outpost evacuations. END SUMMARY

Homesh: "Are we annoying you?"

¶2. (C) According to press, some 10,000 demonstrators ascended the hilltop at Homesh on May 8, the 60th anniversary of Israeli independence. Homesh was evacuated during Gaza disengagement in 2005 and has become a flash point for settlers over the last three years. The "Homesh First" organization regularly leads marches to the hilltop, despite IDF attempts to restrict the area as a closed military zone. They had widely publicized the May 8 march. Settlers typically reach the hilltop on foot, evading IDF obstacles along the nearby roads. PolOff verified March 26 that settlers have established a 24 hour presence without IDF supervision and re-established a makeshift yeshiva that had existed there until 2005 (reftel).

¶3. (C) On May 9, Rabbi Elishama, who led the Yeshiva's re-establishment, told PolOff that "thousands" had gathered at Homesh and that "Homesh belongs to the people of Israel, not to America and not to the Arabs." Probing USG interest in Homesh, Elishama asked "Are we annoying you...Is America getting angry at our presence there?" He insisted, "We are there all the time."

Retaking Sanur

¶4. (C) North of Homesh and south of Jenin, Sanur was also evacuated in 2005. According to the press, late May 8, some 150 settlers marched to the hilltop at Sanur, and as of mid-day May 9, they had not been evacuated by the IDF. This demonstration appears to have been planned quietly and without coordinating with the IDF.

"Migron will...remain here forever"

¶5. (C) Some two thousand demonstrators participated in a May 8 Yesha Council rally and Independence Day celebration at Migron to demonstrate solidarity with Migron settlers in the

face of a GOI commitment to evacuate the outpost by August 12008. Press quoted Yesha leader Dani Dayan saying "Migron will become a permanent settlement and remain here forever." However, Dayan was heckled by the settlers for negotiating with the GOI on outpost evacuations, including Migron. The hecklers were led by former Qedumim mayor and settler activist Daniella Weiss, according to Yesha Council Director General Pinchas Wallerstein. Wallerstein told PolOff May 9 that these demonstrators accused the Yesha Council of not being "tough enough" and of "giving up." He said, however, that this group was small and that important settler rabbis from the ideological settlements of Elon Moreh and Kiryat Arba had advised Weiss not to make trouble. Weiss, he said, "is focused on opposing any agreement with the government" and her efforts with the hilltop youth amount only to "demonstrations, not real outposts." (Note: Since retiring last year, Weiss has focused her efforts to assist the hilltop youth who regularly occupy temporary, symbolic outposts. End Note).

Comment

16. (C) The May 8 demonstrations confirmed that the hilltop youth and their supporters can mobilize large numbers - as at Homesh - and that they are expanding their geographic reach - at Sanur. At Migron, they directly confronted the settler leadership and made clear to the GOI that they will not voluntarily evacuate Migron. Wallerstein downplays the dissent in the settler ranks, but Dayan and the Yesha Council are at a critical juncture in their leadership of the movement. The mere perception that they are negotiating with

JERUSALEM 00000793 002 OF 002

the GOI over outposts like Migron is controversial within the settler community. End comment.

WALLES